

Vellum

10/10/2012

ship "Lion" - yacht to dinner the crew
and passengers

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Vehicles
Ships
Yantic Yacht and Gunship

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

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Yacht

WARSHIP MADE FROM LINCOLN'S YACHT IS BURNED AT DETROIT

Detroit, Mich., May 6.—(P)—The U. S. S. Yantic, battered old training ship and veteran of many civil war naval engagements, was consigned to its final resting place in the Detroit river this morning.

Taps were blown from the Yantic's deck and while naval officers stood about with bared heads the old ship was burned to the water's edge. The Yantic was built as President Lincoln's yacht in 1863, but was turned into a gunboat. Serving through the civil war and on foreign duty, the Yantic later became a training ship for sailors who saw service in the Spanish-American and world wars. The vessel was assigned to Michigan in 1897 and served until 1922.

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Brief History of the U.S.S. Yantic

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Brief History of the U.S.S. *Yantic*

Yantic was constructed in Philadelphia and commissioned on August 12, 1864 at the height of the Civil War. Unconfirmed accounts claim she was originally designed to serve as President Abraham Lincoln's private yacht, but for some unknown reason was ultimately put into service as a gunboat. She was originally configured as a three-masted bark, but was described as having "the lines of a yacht with well deck and plenty of shear." The ship was named after a river in the state of Connecticut.



Often confused with *USS Yantic*, this photo of the *USS Essex* indicates how ships of the period appeared. Her hull is painted black, relieved only by a narrow white streak above her gun ports, which have been fitted with glass panes. Photograph from *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, Volume VIII*, page 517 (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1981)

She was constructed of African live oak and sheathed with copper, the ship's green timber designed to do a better job of keeping out water and shot. Measuring 179 feet in length, a beam of 30 feet and wide-spreading yardarms. Original armament included a 100-pounder rifled gun, a 30-pounder rifled gun, two 9" Dahlgrens and two each of 24- and 12-pounder guns. When launched in Philadelphia she was pronounced as the prettiest thing that had ever been seen in those waters.

Yantic was dispatched immediately to search for the confederate steamship Tallahassee, and later took part in engagements at Fort Fisher, Fort Francis and Fort Anderson. Following the war, *Yantic* traveled the globe, serving in Asia, South America and the West Indies. She got her first taste of colder weather as part of an unsuccessful 1883 expedition to locate the A.W. Greely arctic exploration team.

Meanwhile, Michigan organized its own naval militia in 1893 to train its citizens in appropriate maneuvers. The reserves were activated for service in the 1898 Spanish-American war. Aware of the importance of encouraging a pool of trained reserves, the U.S. Navy began to provide decommissioned naval vessels to various state naval reserve units. According to Duluth maritime historian Pat Labbie, the *USS Essex* was brought into the lakes for the Ohio Naval Militia in Toledo, the *U.S.S. Hawk* in Cleveland and the *U.S.S. Dorothea* at Chicago.

In 1898 *Yantic* was removed from general navy service and loaned to the naval militia of the state of Michigan to serve as a training ship. For her first ten years in the Great Lakes, *Yantic* was assigned to the local battalion in Detroit. In 1907, the Detroit Brigade acquired the *Juan de Austria* for its training ship, and *Yantic* was sent north to Hancock to serve the second battalion, Michigan Naval Militia.

Photographs indicate that *Yantic* was reconditioned during her assignment to Hancock. One of her three masts was removed and her rigging substantially changed (one of the removed yard-arms was later put on display at the Hancock naval reserve center). The ship was refit with new freshwater engines that allowed her to attain cruising speeds of up to 12 mph and several smaller boats were also added to her complement of training equipment. These included a 28' steam cutter, a 28' sailing launch, two 26' whale boats, two 24' cutters and a 16' dinghy. The variety of smaller vessels allowed a wide range of multiship training maneuvers.



U.S.S. *Yantic* tied up along the Ripley shoreline near Hancock, Michigan. Note activity of the Quincy Mining Company smelting works in the background. *Photo courtesy of Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections, Houghton, Michigan. Reeder Negative #A-194.*

From 1907 to 1917, *Yantic* called Hancock her home port. She was docked at the former Lake Superior Smelting Works, near the swing bridge in Ripley and directly across from downtown Houghton. During the year, the ship was used for regular drills of reserve units in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Naval militiamen were drilled in boat handling, weaponry, beach assaults, navigation skills and signaling, and other marine specialties. Once each summer, she and her crew took part in a two-week cruise, where she met up with other naval reserve ships from the Great Lakes region. Ships gathered at South Manitou Island in Lake Michigan for maneuvers and gunnery practice.

With the country's entry into World War I, *Yantic* was brought back into official naval service in 1917, albeit still as a training vessel. She was recommissioned and assigned to service with the Great Lakes Naval Training Station near Chicago.

Following the armistice, *Yantic* was idle for a short period before being assigned to service with the Ohio Naval Reserves operating out of Cleveland. Once again in 1926 she was recommissioned from the U.S. Navy and again loaned to the state of Michigan for use as a training vessel. Her last years were spent at dock in Detroit, her boilers used to heat the Broadhead Armory near Belle Isle. On October 22, 1929, *Yantic* sank alongside her moorings; subsequent investigation revealed structural weakening caused through natural deterioration of her wooden hull. Her anchor and silver-alloy bell were on display at the Armory for many years.



U.S.S. *Yantic* on maneuvers along Portage Lake near the ship's home base of Hancock, Michigan. Men were trained in handling not only *Yantic*, but also a number of smaller launches, cutters and dinghies carried along with the larger ship. Note shaft-houses of the Quincy Mining Company along Quincy Hill in the background. *Photo courtesy of Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections, Houghton, Michigan. Reeder Negative #T-57.*



